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OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

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1776 K STREET, N. W. WASHINGTON, D. C. 20006 (202) 429-7000

DONNA COLEMAN GREGG (202) 429-7260

August 2, 1993

Mr. William F. Caton Secretary Federal Communications Commission 1919 M Street, N.W. Washington, D.C. 20554

Notification of Permitted Ex Parte Presentation

MM Docket No. 92-266

Dear Mr. Caton:

Star Cable Associates, by its attorney and pursuant to Section 1.1206(a)(1)-(a)(2) of the Commission's rules, hereby submits an original and two copies of this memorandum regarding a permitted ex parte presentation to Commission officials regarding MM Docket No. 92-266.

Friday, July 30 at 4:00 p.m., the undersigned and Peter D. Ross of Wiley, Rein & Fielding, along with James Roddey, Michael Haislip, and Matt Polka of Star Cable Associates, met with Bruce Romano, Jay Atkinson, Florence Setzer, Judy Herman, Larry Miller, Jennifer Manner, and Jeffrey Dube of the FCC Cable Task Force. The discussion related to the written ex parte presentation attached hereto, as well as proposals included in the Coalition of Small System Operators' Petition for Reconsideration of the Commission's Report and Order in MM Docket 92-266.

> LISTABCDE

Kindly direct any questions regarding this matter to the undersigned.

Respectfully submitted,

Donna C. Gregg

PDR/lar Attachments 100 Greentree Commons 381 Mansfield Avenue Pittsburgh, PA 15220 Telephone (412) 937-0099 Telefax (412) 937-0145

OUR COMPANY

- * Star Cable Associates is a small, rural cable system operator serving a total of 162 community units in South Carolina, North Carolina, Louisiana, Virginia, Texas and Ohio.
- * Star Cable serves a total of 61,000 customers from 60 headends, thus averaging just over 1,000 customers per headend.
- * Since 1987, Star Cable has constructed over 2,500 miles of cable plant in areas with an average density of just 22 homes per mile -- communities which neighboring cable operators had declined to serve even after rate deregulation under the 1984 Cable Act because of the daunting economics of building low-density systems.

OUR PURPOSE

* Rather than just complaining about the impending rate regulations, Star Cable would like to respond to the Commission's public call for constructive suggestions to tailor its benchmark/price cap mechanism in a way that reasonably reduces the administrative burden and disproportionate impact of regulation on small and more rural cable systems.

OUR PROPOSAL

* Cable operators serving communities with densities significantly below average should be allowed an add-on to their benchmark/price cap-generated rate to offset at least in part the greater investment and expense per subscriber of serving low-density communities.

THE RESULT

- * Cable operators would be better able to cover the disproportionate cost of serving rural America without having to pursue cost-of-service proceedings neither they nor the Commission (or local regulators) can much afford.
- * At the same time, only a small percentage of cable subscribers nationwide would see even the moderate adjustment to benchmark rates contemplated by this proposal.



DENSITY DRIVES CABLE ECONOMICS

The most significant factor in cable system economics is density. At very low densities of 30 homes per mile or less, there is a large increase in capital investment per customer and certain plant expenses per customer. Some of the more significant density variables are as follows:

Initial Capital Investment

Distribution System

The cost to build a mile of cable plant varies little from rural to suburban areas. This is by far the largest portion of a system's capital investment (over 75% in a rural system). There is a direct relationship between density and cost per customer. If one system is half as dense as another, the distribution investment per customer doubles.

Head-end Investment

In the typical scenario attached, the rural operator needs nine head-ends to serve the same number of customers a suburban operator services from one head-end. At a cost of over \$100,000 each, the cost differential per customer is substantial.

- Technical Expenses That Are Driven By Plant Miles.
 - Pole Rent, Property Taxes and System Powering Expense

These expenses are relatively constant on a per mile basis, no matter how many customers are in that mile. The cost per customer rises as density decreases.

Technical Personnel and Related Expenses

While customer levels are a major factor in determining technical staffing levels, in rural areas additional technicians are needed due to travel times and the need to maintain more plant miles. A practical limit is 100 plant miles per technician.



IMPACT OF LOW DENSITY ON CAPITAL INVESTMENT AND EXPENSES

	Rural Density System (22 HPM) (000)	Large Operator Urban Density System (67 HPM) (000)	Comments
Gross Investment: Distribution System	\$10,470	\$3,225	Three times as many plant miles in a rural system (\$15,000/mile).
Head-end	1,100	123	Nine head-ends vs. one.
Vehicles	155	135	One less technical vehicle.
Other	1.805	<u>1.805</u>	
Total	\$ <u>13.530</u>	\$ <u>5.288</u>	Capital investment is 2.5 times as high in a rural area.
Investment/Customer	<u> 1.458</u>	\$ <u>570</u>	
Expenses: Payroli	\$ 460	\$ 468	The rural requirement for an extra technician but is offset by 10-20% higher wages in urban areas.
Plant	477	206	More rural plant miles mean higher costs for system power, pole rent and property taxes.
Service	933	877	Significantly lower programming costs for large operator. Copyright increases in suburban system due to larger head-end size.
G & A	149	138	Office rent is 72% higher in suburban areas but long distance telephone charges are much lower.
Marketing	26	26	
Subtotal	\$ 2,045	\$1,715	This is a 19.2% differential in operating expenses for rural systems.
Depreciation	1.278	_588	Based on investment differences shown above. Detail is attached.
Total	\$ <u>3.323</u>	\$ <u>2,303</u>	This is a 44% differential in total expenses for rural systems.

NOTE: This is a summery comperison of our rural Ohio system at 22 homes per mile vs. a more suburban system with the national average density of 67 homes per mile. Both systems have the same number of customers (9,279 at year-end).



IMPACT OF DENSITY ON CABLE PLANT DEPRECIATION (PER BASIC CUSTOMER)

Homes/Mile	Customers/ Mile @ 60%	Depreciation Differential/ Customer/Month
63	37.75 ⁽¹⁾	
58	35	\$.22
50	30	\$.71
42	25	\$ 1.41
33	20	\$ 2.45
25	15	\$ 4.19

Note:

Information is taken from the Petition for Reconsideration filed on behalf of the Coalition of Small System Operators.

⁽¹⁾ Average customers per mile from the FCC database.



COMPARISON OF BENCHMARK RATES TO POTENTIAL COST-OF-SERVICE RATES

Current System Rate ⁽¹⁾	\$ <u>23.62</u>
Benchmark Rate ⁽¹⁾	\$ <u>20.82</u>
Cost-of-Service Rate (est.)(2)	\$ <u>32.47</u>

Note:

For this type system there is a large gap between the benchmark rate and the cost-of-service rate. An allowance for depreciation as shown on the prior page would conservatively meet the need for relief while still remaining well within cost-of-service boundaries.

July 28, 1993

⁽¹⁾Includes equipment charges

⁽²⁾Conservatively estimated using no intangibles, no income taxes and an 11.25% return on net assets.

STAR CABLE ASSOCIATES

FCC PRESENTATION SUPPORTING MATERIALS

JULY 30, 1993



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- * At the same time, only a small percentage of cable subscribers nationwide (and major MSO systems nationwide) would see even the moderate adjustment to benchmark rates contemplated by this proposal.



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IMPACT OF LOW DENSITY ON CAPITAL INVESTMENT AND EXPENSES

		Large Operator	
	Rural	Urban	
	Density	Density	
	System	System	
	(22 HPM)	(67 HPM)	
	(000)	(000)	Comments
Gross Investment:			
Distribution System	\$10,470	\$ 3,225	Three times as many plant miles in a rural system (\$15,000/mile).
Head-end	1,100	123	Nine head-ends vs. one.
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Star Cable Associates

Impact on Head-end Depreciation of Head-end Size

	Add-on	Ado	l-On
Head-end	Fixed Costs/	Per Satellite	Per Off-Air
Size_	<u>Customer</u>	Channel	Channel
5,000	-		
0,0 2 2			
2,500	\$.029	\$.006	\$.003
_,			
1,000	\$.117	\$.023	\$.011
.,	Ţ.		
750	\$.166	\$.033	\$.015
	V 4,423	•	•
500	\$.264	\$.052	\$.024
	y .— :		
250	\$.558	\$.110	\$.051
	V 133 ii	• • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • •	•
100	\$1.439	\$.283	\$.131
	•	•	•
50	\$2.907	\$.571	\$.264
•	+	· · · · ·	• •

250 sub system - 6 off-airs and 19 cable channels

Fixed Costs	\$.558	
Satellite Channels	2.090	(19 x .110)
Off-air Channels	<u>.306</u>	(6 x .051)
Total Add-on	\$ <u>2.954</u>	•

1,000 sub system - 6 off-airs and 19 cable channels

Fixed Costs	\$.117	
Satellite Channels	.437	(19 x .023)
Off-air Channels	\$ <u>.066</u>	$(6 \times .011)$
Total Add-on	\$620	

Assumptions

- 10 year straight-line depreciation on variable costs and 20 year straight-line depreciation on fixed costs.
- Fixed costs of \$35,000 include head-end building, tower, antennas, fence, etc.
- Variable costs are \$3,100 per satellite channel and \$1,600 per off-air channel.

Star Cable Associates

Gross Asset Summary - Rural vs Average (000's)

	Rural	Average
Distribution System (\$15M/mi)	\$10,470	\$ 3,225
Head-end Fixed Cost (\$35M each) Per Channel Costs	315 785	35 88
Vehicles	155	135
Installation (\$80/drop)	960	960
Converters	275	275
Tools/Equipment/Computers	130	; 130
Initial Marketing	390	390
Furniture and Fixtures	50	50
Gross Assets	\$ <u>13.530</u>	\$ <u>5.288</u>
Investment/Customer	\$ <u>1.458</u>	\$ <u>570</u>

Star Cable Associates

Head-end Capital Costs

Fixed Costs

Building	\$ 3,500
Fence (100 x 100 @ \$9 per foot)	3,600
Tower (60 foot)	15,000
Satellite Antennas	
(4 ea @ \$3,000 installed)	12,000
Air Conditioner	900
Total	\$ <u>35,000</u>

Variable Costs/Channel

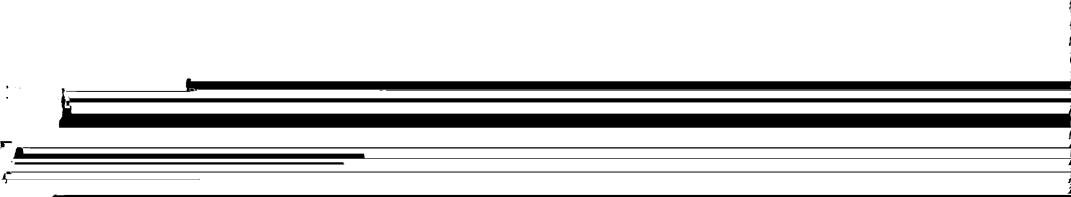
Satellite Channels	
IRD Receiver	\$ 1,800
Modulator	1,200
Miscellaneous	_ 100
Total	\$ 3,100

Off-air Channels	
Processor	\$ 1,100
Antenna	400
Miscellaneous	100
Total	\$ 1,600

Star Cable Associates

Depreciation Schedule -- Average Density

					Deprecia	ation Expe	nse		
	Gross <u>Asset</u>	Useful <u>Life</u>	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995 ——
Distribution System	\$3,225	12	\$ 134	\$ 268	\$ 268	\$ 268	\$ 268	\$ 268	\$ 268
Head-end Fixed Costs Per Channel Costs	35 88	20 10	1 4	2 9	2 9	2 9	2 9	2 9	2 9
Vehicles ⁽¹⁾	135	3	22	45	45	22	22	45	45
Installation	960	7	69	137	137	137	137	137	137
Converters	275	7	20	40	40	40	40	40	40
Tools/Equipment/Computers ⁽²⁾	130	5	13	26	26	26	26	13	13



Star Cable Associates

Depreciation Schedule -- Rural Density

					<u>Deprecia</u>	tion Expe	nse		
	Gross <u>Asset</u>	Useful <u>Life</u>	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1 99 4	1995
Distribution System	\$10,470	12	\$ 436	\$ 872	\$ 872	\$ 872	\$ 872	\$ 872	\$ 872
Head-end Fixed Costs Per Channel Costs	315 785	20 10	8 39	16 78	16 78	16 78	16 78	16 78	16 78
Vehicles ⁽¹⁾	155	3	26	52	52	26	26	52	52
Installation	960	7	69	137	137	137	137	137	137
Converters	275	7	20	40	40	40	40	40	40
Tools/Equipment/Computers ⁽²⁾	130	5	13	26	26	26	26	13	13
Initial Marketing	390	5	39	78	78	78	78	39	
Furniture and Fixtures	50	10	2	5	5	5	5	5	5
Total	\$ <u>13,530</u>		\$ <u>652</u>	\$ <u>1,304</u>	\$ <u>1,304</u>	\$ <u>1,278</u>	\$ <u>1,278</u>	\$ <u>1,252</u>	\$ <u>1,213</u>
Net Book Value @ Year End			\$ <u>12,878</u>	\$ <u>11,574</u>	\$ <u>10,270</u>	\$ <u>8,992</u>	\$ <u>7,869</u>	\$6,617	\$ <u>5,534</u>

⁽¹⁾Replaced in 1993 @ \$135M

⁽²⁾Replaced in 1995 @ \$130M

Star Cable Associates

Head-end Depreciation Expense

Head-end Size	Depreciation/ Customer- Fixed Costs (1)	Depreciation/Cus Satellite Channels ²³	ottomer/Channel Off-Air Channels ⁽³⁾
5,000	\$.0294	\$.0058	\$.0027
2,500	\$.0587	\$.0115	\$.0053
1,000	\$.1468	\$.0288	\$.0133
750	\$.1958	\$.0384	\$.0178
500	\$.2937	\$.0577	\$.0267
250	\$.5873	\$.1153	\$.0533
100	\$1.4683	\$.2883	\$.1333
50	\$2.9366	\$.5766	\$.2667

⁽¹⁾²⁰ year straight line depreciation of \$35,000 of fixed costs.

⁽²⁾10 year straight-line depreciation of \$3,100 of costs per channel.

^{(3) 10} year straight-line depreciation of \$1,600 of costs per channel.

Star Cable Associates

Reconciliation of Rural and Average Density Expenses (000's)

Payroll Rural Density System One less technician 10% higher tech wages 20% higher office wages Payroll taxes Average Density System	\$ 460 (14) 12 14 (4) \$ 468
Plant Rural Density System Plant electric Property Taxes Pole Rent R&M Headend equipment Vehicle Expenses Capitalization Average Density System	\$ 477 (125) (56) (71) (10) (12) 3 \$ 206
Service Rural Density System Copyright Average Density System	\$ 933 <u>94</u> \$ <u>1,027</u>
G&A Rural Density System Office Rent Telephone Average Density System	\$ 149 13 <u>(24)</u> \$ <u>138</u>

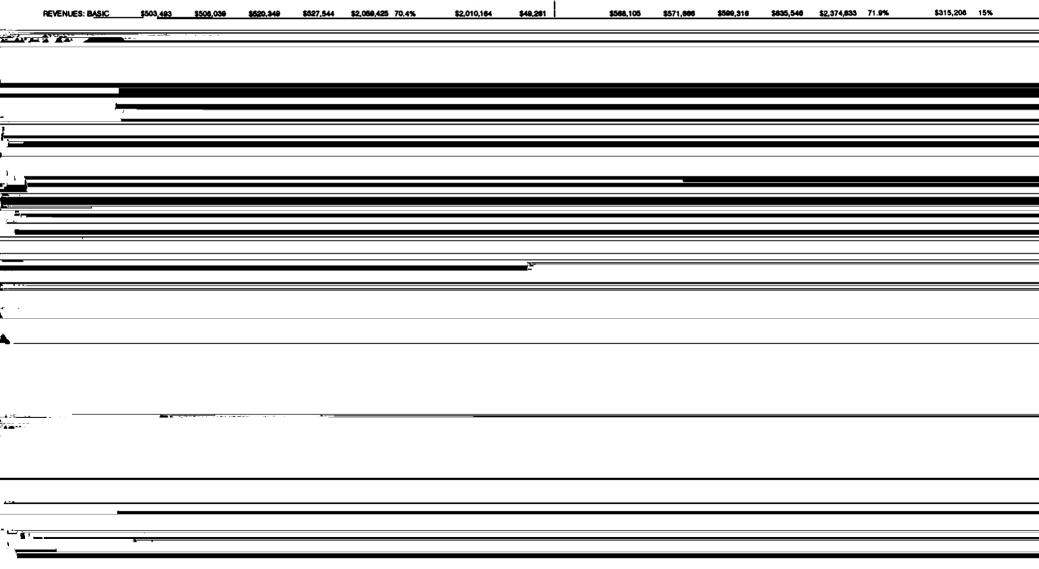
Note: This analysis shows all of the changes made to convert the Rural Density System to an Average Density System.

STAR CABLE IV

1993 BUDGET OPERATING SUMMARY REPORT 101-A

28-Jul-93

	_			1992					_			1993				···-•
OPERATING SUMMAR	1ST QTR	2ND QTR	3RD QTR	4TH QTR	TOTAL % REV	BUDGET	VARIANCE	1	1ST QTR	2ND QTR	3RD QTR	4TH QTR	TOTAL 9	& REV	INCREASE	*
PLANT MILES	691.0	691.0	691.0	696.0	698.0	892.0	6.0	1	215.0	215.0	215.0	215.0	215.0) -69%
HOMES PASSED	14,321	14,321	14,305	14,291	14,291	14,244	47	į	14,441	14,441	14,441	14,441	14,441		150	1%
BASIC CUSTOMERS	8,599	8.762	8,775	8,870	8,870	8,763	107	1	9,030	9.078	9,155	9,279	9,279		409	5%
PENETRATION	60.0%				82.1%	61.5%	0.5%	i	62.5%	62.9%	63.4%	64.3%	64.3%		2.2%	,
PAY UNITS	5,168	5,204	5,150	5,095	5,095	5,000	95	i	5,164	5,224	5,262	5,319	5,319		223	4%
PENETRATION	60.1%	59.4%	58.7%	57.4%	57.4%	57.1%	0.4%	İ	57.2%	57.5%	57.5%	57.3%	57.3%		-0.1%	,
								I							****	



OPERATING BUDGET BASIC SUBSCRIBERS

REPORT 301 28 - Jul - 93

	9-30-92 4Q 92	JAN 93	FEB 93	MAR 93	APR 93	MAY 93	JUN 93	JUL 93	AUG 93	SEP 93	OCT 93	NOV 93	DEC 93	TOTAL
HOMES PASSED/MILES			204.0	0040	204.0			204.0		004.0		204.0	204.0	~ _ <i></i> .
* ~U/G ~Total * HOMES PASSED	656.5 658.5 34.5 39.5 691.0 696 .0 14,305 14,291	11.0	204.0 11.0 215.0 14,441											

	9-30-92	4Q 92			MAR 93	APR 93	MAY 93	JUN 93	JUL 93	AUG 93	SEP 93	OCT 93	NOV 93	DEC 93	TOTAL
* NEW MKT RELEASES * HOMES MARKETED * SELL-IN PENETRATION		69 69 55.0%	0 0.0%	0 0 0.0%	0 0 0.0%	0 0 0.0%	0 0 0.0%	0.0%	0 0 0.0%	0 0 0.0%	0.0%	0 0 0.0%	0 0 0.0%	0 0 0,0%	0
ENDING INVENTORY	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	

BASIC CUS	TOMERS	9-30-92	40 92	JAN 93	FEB 93	MAR 93	APR 93	MAY 93	JUN 93	JUL 93	AUG 93	SEP 93	OCT 93	NOV 93	DEC 93	TOTAL
CONNECT	S: NEW MKT		38	0)		0
•	OTHER		522	131	135	155	155	155	132	132	160	180	180	175	170	1,860
	TOTAL		560	131	135	155	155	155	132	132	160	180	180	175	170	1,860
DISCONN	ECTS: TOTAL		465	131		131		131	132							1,581
•	CHURN %		1.8%	1.5%	1.5%	1.5%	1.5%	1.5%	1.5%	1.5%	1.5%	1.5%	1.5%	1.5%	1.5%	
NET GAIN	:		95	(0) 4	24	24	24	0	0	28	48	47	7 41	36	278
END OF M	10NTH	8,605	8,700	8,700	8,705	8,729	8,753	8,777	8,777	8,778	8,806	8,854	8,901	8,943	8,978	
* COMMER	ICIAI S	170	170	301	301	301	301	301	301	301	301	301	301	I 301	301	
	SIC SUBS	8,775		9,001												••=
	SUBSCRIBERS	_ ,	8,823	8,936												
BASIC PE	NETRATION	61.3%	62.1%	62.3%	62.4%	62.5%	62.7%	62.9%	62.9%	62.9%	63.1%	63.4%	63.7%	64.0%	64.3%	

OPERATING BUDGET
PAY SUBSCRIBERS

28-Jul-93

	9-30-92	4Q 92	JAN 93	FEB 93	MAR 93	APR 93	MAY 93	JUN 93	JUL 93	AUG 93	SEP 93	OCT 93	NOV 93	DEC 93	TOTAL
TOTAL PAY UNITS															
* PAY/BASIC NEW MARKET SELL-IN %	-	55%	55%	55%	55%	55%	55%	55%	55%	55%	55%	55%	55%	55%	
CONNECTS - NEW MK CONNECTS - ALL OTH TOTAL CONNECTS		21 566 609	0 155 155	0 155 155	0 160 160	0 185 185	200 200 0	0 206 205	, 210 210		225	225		0 225 225	0 2,3 65 2,3 65
DISCONNECTS * CHURN %		612 4.0%	178 3.5%	178 3.5%	177 3.5%	176 3.5%	176 3.5%	177 3.5%	204 4.0%	204 4.0%			206 4.0%		2,293
NET GAIN		(3)	(23)	(23)	(17)	9	24	26	6	11	21	20	19	18	92
END OF MONTH	5,096	5,095	5,072	5,049	5,033	5,041	5,065	5,093	5,099	5,110	5,131	5,150	5,109	5,188	
COMMERCIALS TOTAL PAY UNITS	5,0 96		131 5,203	131 5,180	131 5,164	131 5,172	131 5,1 96	131 5,224	131 5,230				131 5,300		.==
AVERAGE UNITS PAY/BASIC PENE	58.1%	5,007 57.4%	5,149 57.8%	5,192 57. 5%		5,168 57.1%		5,210 57.5%							

(Residential Units)	9-30-92	4Q 92	JAN 93	FEB 93	MAR 93	APR 93	MAY 93	JUN 93	JUL 93	AUG 93	SEP 93	OCT 93	NOV 93	DEC 93	TOTAL
% OF TOTAL PAY															
HBO	36.8%	36.5%	36.6%	36.9%	36.9%	36.9%	36.7%	36.7%	36.7%	36.6%	36.4%	36.2%	36.1%	36.0%	-0.59
* SHOWTIME	15.7%	16.5%	16.5%	16.5%	16.5%	16.5%	16.7%	16.7%	16.7%	16.7%	16.8%	16.8%	16.8%	16.8%	0.35
* CINEMAX	29.2%	27.5%	27.1%	25.9%	25.9%	25.9%	25.7%	25.7%	25.7%	25.6%	25.6%	25.7%	25.8%	25.8%	-1.79
* TMC	0.0%	2.8%	3.1%	4.0%	4.0%	4.0%	4.2%	4.2%	4.2%	4.4%	4.5%	4.5%	4.5%	4.5%	1.79
* DISNEY	18.3%	16.7%	16.7%	16.7%	16.7%	16.7%	16.7%	16.7%	16.7%	16,7%	16.7%	16.8%	16.8%	16.9%	0.29
* REGIONAL SPORTS.	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0
* TIGERVISION	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0
* OTHER 1	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0
* OTHER 2	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	0.0
EOM PAY UNITS															
HBO (Residential)	1.874	1,860	1,856	1,863	1.857	1,860	1,859	1,869	1.871	1,870	1,868	1,864	1,866	1,868	
SHOWTIME	800	841	837	833	830	832	846	850	852				808	872	3
CINEMAX	1,489	1,401	1.374	1,306	1,303	1,306	1,302		1,310	1,306	1,313	1,324	1.334	1,338	(6
TMC	0	143	157	202	201	202	213	214	214	225	231	232	233	233	è.
DISNEY	935	851	847	843	840	842	846	850	852	853	857	865	806	877	2
REGIONAL SPORTS.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
TIGERVISION	0	0	Ō	0	. 0	Ō	ō	ō	ō	ō	0	Ō	ō	ō	
OTHER 1	0	0	Ö	0	0	Ō	ō	Ŏ	ō	Ō	ı o	Ō	ō	ō	
OTHER 2	ō	Ö	ŏ	Ō	0	Ō	ŏ	ŏ	Ŏ	Ō	· o	Ŏ	Ō	ŏ	
* COMMERCIALS	0	o	131	131	131	131	131	131	131	131	131	131	131	131	19
	5,098	5,095	5.203	5,180	5,164	5,172	5,196	5,224	5,230	5,241	5,262	5,281	5,300	5,319	2